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COLUMN

SARAMACCAN AND HAITIAN: A COMPARISON

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The following comments may be rather controversial, both in the conclusions reached and in the methodology employed. What I want to claim is that Haitian stands much further away from potential African source languages than Saramaccan, and that this is particularly reflected in the distribution of potential African features in comparable texts in both languages. Since this is a column, I will leave out the caveats and hedges of a scholarly article and state the position as concisely as possible.

You may interpret the following either positively as a sketch for a research program or negatively as a bungled attempt at research with premature conclusions. Of course we lack the agreed upon methodologies necessary to really have a chance of a conclusive debate on this issue, and I have not worked closely on either language. Nonetheless, I think the question is interesting, even if difficult to answer and even though others may answer it differently.

I came to the tentative conclusion expressed here only gradually; until quite recently I had assumed, with others, that Saramaccan (or at least the related non-maroon language, Sranan) and Haitian were almost on a par as rather "radical" creoles. Whatever the final outcome of the substratum debate, it would be the same for both languages. Doubt came very slowly, and in retrospect, in a number of steps. Ten years ago I was comparing the preposition systems of a number of creoles. While I found that even Saramaccan had more prepositions than researchers such as Byrne and Bickerton had made it appear, there was no doubt that Haitian, along with other French-lexifier Creoles, had a much more elaborate system, lacking the complex phrasal PPs

of Saramaccan. A few years later, Norval Smith discovered that part of the question-word system of Saramaccan was Fongbe lexically, while the Haitian system (for which a Fon underlying pattern was claimed in Lefebvre 1986, to be sure) lacked any Fongbe elements (see also Muysken & Smith 1990). Then, later again, in work with Rajendra Singh, I studied the phenomenon of paragoge in the creole languages (Muysken & Singh, in press). We argue strongly for its West African substratum origin. Paragoge is very frequent in Berbice Dutch Creole and in the Suriname Creoles, present but less frequent in other Atlantic Creoles (with Portuguese, Dutch, or English lexifiers), and completely absent in the French Creoles. Alleyne (1980:63) claims that this is due to evolution towards the superstrate, but why then is Haitian without a trace of paragoge? The final seed of doubt came into my mind when I started perusing the texts in Hall's collection (1953) to extract examples of serial verbs for a didactic sketch of Haitian and had trouble finding any but a few basic ones.

Before looking at two roughly comparable texts in Haitian and Saramaccan in more detail with respect to their grammatical features, let me summarize some of the phonological and morphological features of Saramaccan that are most likely to have an African origin and that Haitian lacks (thanks are due to Norval Smith for discussions about this section):

(a) There are pre-nasalized stops in Saramaccan, as in *ndéti* 'night', *ndjaká* 'crosspin on raft', and *mbéi* 'make'. These are absent in Haitian.

(b) Saramaccan has co-articulated stops, as in *kpáta* 'type of monkey', *gbi* 'wee; very small', while Haitian does not.

(c) While neither Saramaccan nor Haitian has a tendency towards monosyllabic lexemes, a feature of Fon-Gbe, Haitian shows the phenomenon of incorporated articles, as in *diri* 'rice' (< FR *du riz*), yet a step further away from monosyllabicity.

(d) As is well known, Saramaccan has a well-developed distinction between high and low tone throughout the lexicon, with morphosyntactic implications. Haitian lacks this distinction.

(e) As I said before, in Saramaccan we quite generally have paragogic or epithetic vowels, as in *háfu* 'half' (< DU, ENG *half*), *tánda* 'tooth' (< DU *tand*), and *baási* 'bladder' (< DU *blaas*). In Haitian we have *sink* 'five', *tèt* 'head', and so forth.

The feature of nasalization in Haitian, though widespread among the Atlantic Creoles and possibly reinforced by African source languages, is also

present in the lexifier language French, and not sufficiently marked (in terms of a universalist phonological theory) to be forcibly attributed to the substrate. The same holds for palatalization.

On the morpho-lexical level, Saramaccan has four features that are strongly reminiscent of Fon and related West African languages but that are absent in Haitian:

(a) As argued in Smith & Veenstra (1994), Saramaccan has complex agentive formations with the aid of the suffix *ma* (< ENG *man*). These are absent in Haitian.

(b) Saramaccan has productive reduplication to form participles and adjectives from verbs. Again, this is not the case in Haitian.

(c) There are phrasal locative prepositions in Saramaccan, consisting of the locative marker *a* and a locative noun (top, bottom, back). These are absent in Haitian, which generally has fully lexical prepositions.

(d) Finally, Saramaccan, unlike Haitian, makes extensive use of ideophones.

No other productive Haitian phonological or morphological features are evident that must be attributed to African substrate influence. However, on the syntactic level, Haitian has a number of constructions which have been claimed (and I think with reason) to have an African source, notably serial verb constructions and a group of patterns jointly referred to as "predicate cleft," involving verb doubling. These are shared by Saramaccan and Haitian, although there have not been studies showing that Saramaccan has the diversity of predicate cleft constructions of Haitian.

In addition, Haitian has a postposed determiner (*la* and related forms), which has close parallels in Fon, but is not shared by Saramaccan. Saramaccan does have postposed adverbial deictics, as in *di wósu akí* (DET house here) 'this house' and *de omí dé* (DET man there) 'that man'. Haitian *la* is derived from the French enclitic adverb *là*, which is also a post-nominal deictic. Its frequency and syntactic distribution in the varieties of French that formed the input to Haitian are matters of some controversy.

To assure maximum comparability, I will take two thematically similar folktales: *Kouman malfini vini manjé poul* ('How hawk came to eat chicken') from Haitian (about 420 words; Hall 1953:186–8) and *Totomboti* ('Woodpecker') from Saramaccan (about 550 words, of which 100 make up an uninterpretable song; Rountree & Glock 1982:177–81). My main interest will be prepositions, double objects, serial verbs, and focus constructions. The

glosses are my own interpretation; the idiomatic English translations are the ones supplied by Hall and Rountree & Glock.

The Haitian story is fairly rich in prepositions:

(1)	nan	5	unspecified locative
	kote	3	'at'
	avèk	3	'with'
	sou	1	'on top of'
	la-dan	1	'inside'
	o-pwen ke	1	'to the point that'
	ak	1	'with'

The use of *kote* in Haitian could be interpreted as being derived from a phrasal preposition, contrary to what was said above; but notice (as pointed out by Holm 1988:210) that *kote* could easily have a French source in *à côté de* 'next to'. Similarly *la-dan* has a French parallel in *la-dedans* and *o-pwen ke* may be a French borrowing into Haitian.

The text also contains 13 indirect object constructions, the majority after the verb *di* 'tell, say'. Examples are:

- (2) a. Solèy te-dwe malfini you krazé.
 sun ANT-owe hawk one thing
 'Sun owed Hawk a little something.'
- b. Li rakonte konpe kòk tribilasyon.
 3 tell brother rooster trouble
 'He told Brother Rooster his troubles.'
- c. Ban mwe lajan mwe pou-m-ale.
 give 1 money 1 for-1-go
 'Give me my money so I can go.'

There are three serial verb constructions:

- (3) a. Kite lajan ale kole grif ou nan-tèt kòk.
 leave money go sink claw 2 LOC-head rooster
 'Leave the money [and] go sink your claws into Rooster's head.'
- b. W-a-retounen vini pran lajan.
 2-FUT-return come take money
 'You're to come back and get the money.'

- c. Tout poul se-kouri kache.
 all chicken run hide
 'All the chickens ran to hide.'

Two out of the three serial chains are of the sequential type: The actions portrayed are sub-events of a single action. The exception is *vini* 'come' in (3b), which only marks the direction of the first verb, *retounen* 'return' with respect to the speaker.

The story contains several focus constructions, both major constituent focus (of a noun phrase) and predicate focus. A nice example where they are combined is:

- (4) Ala sòt ou sòt, se-rouj tèt poul rouj, *sepa*
 well stupid 2 stupid, FOC-red head rooster red, FOC-NEG
dife li ye.
 fire 3 be
 'You sure are stupid. Chicken's head is only red, it's not fire.'

Here, the sequences *sòt...sòt* and *se-rouj...rouj* are examples of emphatic predicate cleft, and *sepa dife* is a case of ordinary cleft.

This concludes my brief survey of some of the features exemplified in the Haitian text. I do not know how representative this text is of its type, and precisely what variety of Haitian is portrayed in it.

Consider now the Saramaccan text, for which I will look at the same range of constructions. As for prepositions, we find the following types:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------|---|----------------------|
| (5) | te | 9 | 'until' |
| | fu | 4 | 'of' |
| | fu | 1 | 'for' |
| | ku | 4 | 'with' |
| | a | 2 | unspecified locative |
| | a basu | 1 | 'below' |
| | a (...) liba | 1 | 'above' |
| | kuma | 1 | 'like' |
| | ufó | 1 | 'before' |

It is striking that *te* 'until' is used so often, both in its temporal and in its locative meaning.

There are no cases of indirect objects in the text; the only time one could occur, a serial verb *da* 'give' is introduced.

- (6) gaama taki da-en tu taa
 chief say give 3 also saying
 'and the chief said to him as well'

I do not know yet how to interpret the finding concerning indirect objects. It may be just an accident of the text that we looked at, or something deeper concerning a potential difference between Haitian and Saramaccan.

The above example also introduces the serial verb construction, which is quite frequent and varied in the text. First some examples:

- (7) a. So di sitonu *tei* go pii.
 so the rock take go IDEO
 'That's the way the rock used to be (i.e., was taken).'
- b. Gaama, mi o-go *naki luku*.
 chief, 1 FUT-go hit look
 'Granman (chief), I am going to try.'
- c. Hen a *waka go seeka tampu*.
 then he walk go arrange stand
 'Then he walked to the other place and got himself ready.'
- d. A *puu* di mbalu de *guu tuwe* go te kuma
 he pull the chip there IDEO throw-away go until like
 ala.
 there
 'He broke off a chip and tossed it away.'

These examples illustrate the fact that serial verbs are not only interpreted sequentially as in the Haitian text — although this does occur, as with *waka go / seeka tampu* in (7c) and with *puu / tuwe go* in (7d). Another example of a particularly complex sequence illustrates the possibility of marking the different verbs in the serial chain with progressive aspect, to stress the ongoing character of the action:

- (8) A *ko fika* a ta-*waka* ta-*naki*,
 3 come remain 3 PR walk PR hit
 a ta *waka* a di sitonu liba ta-*naki* en ta-*lontu*
 3 PR walk LOC DET stone above PR hit 3 PR surround
 nango ta *ko*.
 PR-go PR come
 'He kept walking around pecking, walking around on the top of the rock pecking, going back and forth.'¹

Notice the sequence of adverbial specification of shifting location *to lontu nango ta ko* 'PR surround PR-go PR come' at the end.

To give an indication of the range, the following is a list of the adjacent pairs of serial verbs in the text:

(9)	tei go	'take go'	
	naki luku	'knock look'	
	taki taa	'say saying'	
	ko dou	'come arrive'	
	waka go	'walk go'	
	go seeka	'go prepare'	
	seeka tampu	'prepare stand'	
	hiti go	'throw go'	
	ko fika	'come stay'	[2]
	djombo ko	'jump come'	
	du puu	'do pull'	
	puu tuwe	'pull throw-away'	
	tuwe go	'throw-away go'	[2]
	hopo tuwe	'lift throw-away'	
	tuusi go	'shove go'	
	go peka	'go get-stuck'	
	seeka go	'prepare go'	
	go tampu	'go stand'	
	waka naki	'walk knock'	[2]
	naki lontu	'hit surround'	
	lontu go	'surround go'	
	go ko	'go come'	
	tja ko	'carry come'	[2]
	taki da	'say give'	
	ko bei	'come bury'	

While this list is perhaps redundant and to some readers already familiar, I have compiled it to show the diversity and frequency of serial verb constructions in a relatively short Saramaccan text.

Finally, we turn to clefting constructions in the Saramaccan story. They turn out to be nearly absent. Emphasis is often marked with *seei* 'self', as in:

- (10) a. Sembe seei an de u bebe wata.
 people self not there for drink water
 'No one could drink the water.'
- b. E a de tide seei fu tee-fu ndeti,
 if it be today self or until night
 Gaama, mi o-si wan pisi f-en.
 chief, 1 FUT-see one piece of-3
 'If I have to work all day until night falls, Granman, I am going
 to keep on until I make some headway.'

The one case of a true cleft may be:

- (11) Fa a ta-diki pau baaku de, noo baaku we a ta-diki.
 how 3 PR-dig tree hole there, only hole well 3 PR-dig
 'As he digs a hole in the tree there, it is a grave he is digging.'

Here the clefted element is flanked with *noo* 'only' and *we* 'well'.

In considering the absence of predicate cleft in the Saramaccan text, it is important to take account of the wide range of ideophones, which strengthen the action of the verb:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (12) tei go pii | 'take go' IDEO |
| wata pasa gililili | 'water pass' IDEO |
| kaba kiii | 'finish' IDEO |
| tjoko di sitonu kookookoo | 'peck the rock' IDEO |
| luku en diin | 'look him' IDEO |
| djombo vuu ko | 'jump' IDEO 'come' |
| ko dou vaa | 'come arrive' IDEO |
| puu di mbalu guu | 'pull the chip' IDEO |
| tuwe go te a' gom | 'throw away go till there' IDEO |
| ful-een buluum | 'split it' IDEO |
| ... katjakatjakatjakatja | [this person] ... IDEO |
| seeka zaaa go tampu | 'arrange' IDEO 'go stand' |
| dee sitonu saka holooo | PL 'rock fall-down' IDEO |
| di lio booko wajaa | 'the river break' IDEO |
| diki pau domdomdom | 'dig tree' IDEO |

Thus, in this respect as well, the organization of the story is quite different from the earlier Haitian text.

I hope to have demonstrated two things:

- (a) The way information is structured in the Haitian and in the Saramaccan folktale is quite different.
- (b) In most respects, the Saramaccan text incorporates many more of what have been tentatively identified as West African features than the Haitian text.

The absence of predicate cleft in the Saramaccan text may have an independent explanation.

I am not advocating a return to the taxonomic, exclusively corpus-based linguistics practiced by some researchers in the forties and fifties, but I do think it is important to see how the syntactic possibilities of a language are realized in actual texts. Particularly when we compare languages — and pidgin and creole studies often involve comparison — I think it is legitimate to circumscribe the objects of comparison. Representative text samples can help us here, and I would be grateful for suggestions for Haitian texts more comparable to the Saramaccan text looked at in this column. Isolated grammaticality judgments may make the Caribbean Creoles look much more similar than they really are, as well as obscuring the variation within them.

NOTES

I am grateful for comments from Norval Smith on the phonology of Saramaccan and Haitian.

1) Notice incidentally that the sequence *a ko fika a ta waka* '3 come remain 3 PR walk' would be problematic if one assumes that the subject *a* is repeated, although it is clear that *fi* and *waka* are semantically linked. This would go against the common assumption that in serial constructions the subject is only indicated once. Rountree & Glock (1982) gloss *a ko fika* as 'it come remain', however. In fact, *fi* appears to function also as an impersonal verb in Saramaccan, either marking durative aspect as in (8), or semi-existential constructions (Groot 1981:35). *ko* V generally has an inchoative interpretation:

- (i) a. A fika tú u de.
it remain two of them
'Two of them were left over.'
- b. A fika déé miíi ku di tatá-mujée.
it remain PL child with DET stepmother
'There remained the children and the stepmother.'

In addition, the verb *fi* can be used personally:

- (ii) Di mujée-miíi akí bi fika a gandá na-a-dé.
DET girl here TNS remain LOC village there
'The girl was left over (or remained) in the village (without a husband).'

This matter is of some interest for two reasons. First, it illustrates an optional raising verb in Saramaccan. Second, the aspectual use of an impersonal construction has not been documented, to my knowledge, for any creole language. Generally, we find preverbal particles, serial verbs, or adverbs marking aspectual distinctions.

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